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ABSTRACT

This paper recounts the influence of two of the great educational philosophers of this century, John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Both men came to the University of Chicago from teaching at the University of Michigan. The men were life-long personal friends and professional colleagues. Although Mead published little during his life, his influence on John Dewey was the product of conversations over years of contact. Mead remained at the University of Chicago until his death in 1931 and became most renowned for his work in social psychology. Together with Peirce and James, Dewey and Mead became the founding fathers of American pragmatism. This paper examines a typescript of student notes of Mead's course on philosophy of education and analyzes the ideas presented against the backdrop of the contributions of Mead to the field. (EH)

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George Herbert Mead's Lectures on Philosophy of Education at the University of Chicago (1910-1911)

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George Herbert Mead's Lectures on Philosophy of Education at the University of Chicago (1910-1911)[1]

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Prologue

In the summer of 1891 President James Burrill Angell of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor appointed a 28 year old student from Berlin as instructor in the Department of Philosophy. His teaching duties were to consist of a course in physiological psychology, a course in the history of philosophy, a course in evolution and "a half course in Kant" (Mead, quoted in Cook, 1993, p. 24-25). The student, who had been studying in Berlin for two and a half years with Hermann Ebbinghaus, Friedrich Paulsen, and Wilhelm Dilthey, and, before that, for half a year in Leipzig with Wilhelm Wundt, was George Herbert Mead. The chair of the Department of Philosophy in Ann Arbor, where Mead arrived in the fall of 1891, was John Dewey. And the event of their meeting marked the beginning of a life-long personal and professional friendship (see Jane M. Dewey, 1939, p. 25).

Dewey, who was only a few years older than Mead but already had a well-established reputation in philosophical circles (see Westbrook, 1991, p. 33), had a profound impact upon Mead's thought. In a letter from June 1892, after just two semesters in Ann Arbor, Mead wrote to his wife's parents:

> There is no freer place for thought and investigation in the world than here, and Mr. Dewey is a man of not only great originality and profound thought but the most appreciative thinker I ever met. I have gained more from him than from any one man I ever met. (Mead, quoted in Cook, 1993, p. 32)

Although there is ample evidence of the influence of Dewey's work upon Mead (see, e.g., Cook, 1993, pp. 38-40), it is evenly clear that Mead's thought was of great importance for Dewey. Jane M. Dewey has stressed, that since Mead published little

during his lifetime, "his influence on Dewey was the product of conversations carried on over a period of years and its extent has been underestimated" (Jane M. Dewey, 1939, p. 25). Yet, this influence was substantial. In his eulogy at a memorial service for Mead, Dewey not only called him "the most original mind in philosophy of America of the last generation" (Dewey, 1985, p. 24). He also stated that Mead's ideas on social psychology and the social interpretation of life and the world "worked a revolution" in his own thinking (ibid., p. 27), and confessed, "I dislike to think what my own thinking might have been, were it not for the seminal ideas which I derived from him" (ibid., p. 24; see also Dewey, 1971, p. 167).[2]

Early in 1894 Dewey was offered the head professorship of philosophy at the University of Chicago, an offer which he accepted in March of that year (see Dykhuizen, 1973, p. 74). Right after his acceptance, Dewey wrote two letters to President William Rainey Harper in order to urge him to appoint Mead as a member of his department (see Cook, 1993, p. 200, n.37). The attempt was successful, as Mead was offered the position of assistant professor in the department of philosophy. The Meads and the Deweys, who had lived in neighboring houses in Ann Arbor, moved to Chicago in the summer of 1894, and lived in the same building for many years. As Dewey recounts, "there was hardly a day we did not exchange visits" (Dewey, 1985, p. 22).

The rest is history. Dewey established his famous Laboratory School (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936), became a major figure in the reform of education, both nationally and internationally (see Biesta & Miedema, 1996), and continued to be a prolific and influential writer on philosophical and pedagogical issues, both in Chicago and in New York, where he took up a professorship in philosophy at Columbia University after his resignation from the University of Chicago in 1904. Mead remained a member of the philosophy department in Chicago (from 1902-1907 as associate professor and from 1907 onwards as professor of philosophy) until his death in 1931.[3] He became most renowned for his work in social psychology, especially as the main, albeit contested (see Joas, 1989, p. 235, n.38) source of inspiration for *symbolic interactionism* (see Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992, pp. 1-22). Together with Peirce and James, Dewey and Mead became the founding fathers of American pragmatism (see, e.g., Thayer, 1973; Scheffler, 1986).

Introduction

In the "traditional" history of pragmatism, a sharp distinction is often made between Dewey's work on philosophy and pedagogy on the one hand, and Mead's work on (social) psychology on the other. This is especially true in the field of education, where Dewey is considered to be the single most important factor in the shaping of the pragmatic approach to education (see, e.g., Cremin, 1988; Kliebard, 1986). What is hardly known, is that Mead was also quite actively involved in educational issues, both on a practical level and in his writings.[4]

Mead and his wife, who enrolled their only son in the Lab School, edited Dewey's lectures on the school which were published as *The School and Society* (1900). Mead served as president of the School of Education Parents' Association (see Mead, 1903/04), and contributed editorial notes to the *School Review* and *The Elementary School Teacher*, of which he was editor for several years (see Renger, 1979, p. 43; Mead, 1907/08a). Mead served as chairman of the standing Committee on Public Education of the City Club of Chicago (see Barry, 1968; Cook, 1993, pp. 105-108; Mead, 1912), in which role he studied the educational needs and problems of the immigrant population of Chicago and suggested steps to alleviate some of the problems (see, e.g., Mead, Wreidt and Bogan, 1912). He was also one of the vice-presidents of the Public Education Association of Chicago (Cook, 1993, p. 107).

Although Mead was certainly not a prolific writer -- his list of publications, including book-reviews and newspaper articles, consists of about 100 titles (see Joas, 1989, pp. 236-240) -- he did publish on educational issues to the extent that about one fifth of his publications deals with the theory and practice of education (see Renger, 1980, p.115). While the quantity of his publications might explain why Mead has had so little impact upon educational theory and practice in general, the primary concern, in retrospect, has to be with the content of his work. With respect to this, Renger has argued, that although Mead never wrote a comprehensive treatise on education, the convictions he expressed in his posthumously published works, various journal articles and reviews, lectures, miscellaneous fragments and previously unavailable and unpublished works do constitute "a genuine philosophy of education" (Renger, 1979, p. 44; see also Renger, 1980).

There are two reasons why I consider it to be important and timely to reconstruct this philosophy. One reason is of a *historical* concern. So far, there is little known about the pedagogical part of Mead's scholarship. From the point of view of intellectual history, there is, therefore, every reason to try to get a more complete picture. This may also shed some light upon the "seminal ideas" that influenced Dewey, which may eventually lead to a better understanding of the intellectual interaction between Mead and Dewey.[5]

The other reason is of a *theoretical* concern. To my understanding, the main philosophical significance of pragmatism lies in its break with the modern, consciousness-centered conception of human subjectivity and with the philosophical tradition built upon it (see, e.g., Biesta, 1994, 1995). Dewey has captured this very well in his contention that mind is not "an original datum" but rather represents "something acquired" (Dewey, 1980, p. 60, p. 58). Pragmatism entails a radical break with the "false psychology of original individual consciousness" (Dewey, 1983, p. 62) and with the evenly false philosophy of consciousness built upon it. This break does *not* imply what over the past decades has become known as the end or the death of the subject. What it does imply -- and this is in accord with a more careful interpretation of postmodernism (see Biesta, in press[a], in press[b]) -- is the end of a specific *understanding* of human subjectivity. Pragmatism -- at least in the work of Dewey and Mead -- entails a reversal of priority, in that it takes its point of departure in what happens *in between* human beings. This is not just a shift of attention from individuals to social interaction, as this could still leave the contested understanding of human subjectivity itself in its place. At stake is the claim that "intersubjectivity", i.e., what happens *in between* human beings, precedes subjectivity and is constitutive of it.

From a theoretical point of view the important question is what the implications of this "paradigm-shift" from consciousness to intersubjectivity are for the way we conceive of education -- a question which has become more urgent as a result of the general (philosophical) critique of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness (see, e.g., Derrida, 1976; Habermas, 1987). Given the fact that the intersubjective point of view plays such a central role in Mead's work,[6] a reconstruction of his philosophy of education might help in getting a better idea of the pedagogical implications of this perspective.

For the latter purpose, Mead's published writings on education are not all too helpful. As I will show in more detail below, Mead developed his ideas about intersubjectivity -- or to be more precise: his theory about the social origin of reflective consciousness -- in a series of articles that appeared between 1900 and 1913 (see also Biesta, 1997). While Mead's publications on education appeared between 1896 and 1915 (see Mead, 1896, 1915), and thus encompass the period in which he developed his more general point of view, most of his theoretical and philosophical work on education (such as Mead, 1896, 1898, 1906a, 1906b) dates from the beginning of this period (the only exception being a paper titled "The psychology of social consciousness implied in instruction"; Mead, 1910b). The major part of his later publications is related to his work for the City Club, and deals primarily with educational policy and vocational education (see, e.g., Mead, 1907/08b, 1908, 1908/09, 1912, 1915; Mead, Wreidt and Bogan, 1912).

While Mead's published writings do contain clues about his philosophy of education, they do not contain a systematic pedagogical "translation" of his ideas about intersubjectivity. There is, however, one rather unique source in which Mead does discuss educational philosophy in a systematic way; a source, moreover, which dates from 1910-1911, a time when Mead was well ahead with the development of his ideas about intersubjectivity. This source is a typescript of 196 pages of student notes of Mead's course on philosophy of education, which he gave in the Department of Philosophy and the College of Education of the University of Chicago.[7]

In this paper I want to explore this typescript against the background of Mead's intersubjective point of view, in order to see if, and if so, in what way, Mead did "translate" these ideas into a theory or philosophy of education. I will start with an overview of Mead's ideas on the social origin of reflective consciousness. I will then discuss his course on philosophy of education. In the final section I will summarize my findings. My main aim is to provide insight in Mead's ideas about education and their relationship with his more general ideas about human action, social interaction and the social origin of reflective consciousness. Besides the historical reason (i.e., the Dewey-Mead relationship), I expect that the reconstruction of Mead's thought can also help to get an idea of what an intersubjective conception of education might look like.

The social origin of reflective consciousness: Mead's early writings

Mead's break with the "false psychology of original individual consciousness" took shape in a series of articles that appeared between 1900 and 1925. Five of them, published between 1909 and 1913, contain, as Cook has shown, "almost all the major ideas of his mature psychology" (Cook, 1993, p. 66). In this section I give an overview of Mead's ideas in so far as they had taken shape in these early writings.[8]

Meaning and action

The central claim in Mead's early writings is that reflective consciousness has a social origin (see, e.g., SW, 1909, p. 97[9]). Reflective consciousness includes both the ability to make oneself the object of one's own attention (self-consciousness) and the ability for consciousness reflection (conceptual thought). Mead's claim therefore entails, that both the conscious self and its use of symbols have a social origin.

Because reflective consciousness is not an original datum, Mead's account of the social origin of reflective consciousness cannot rely upon a conception of social interaction where reflective consciousness is already presupposed. In 1909 he puts this predicament as follows.

> We cannot assume that the self is both a product and a presupposition of human consciousness, that reflection has arisen through social consciousness and that social intercourse has arisen because human individuals had ideas and meanings to express. (SW, 1909, p. 97)

Mead finds his way out of this dilemma by means of an account of social interaction in terms of *action*. This account, Mead writes, locates the probable beginning of human communication in *cooperation*, "where the act of the one answered to and called out the act of the other" (SW, 1909, p. 101).

Mead's ideas about the social origin of reflective consciousness are based upon the functional account of individual action (i.e., action towards "physical objects") that he had already developed in two articles from 1900 and 1903. Both articles clearly reveal the influence of Dewey's critique of the use of the reflex arc concept in psychology (see Dewey, 1972/1896). Central to Mead's account of individual action is a "behavioral" conception of meaning, which centers around the claim that the meaning of

an object "is derived entirely from our reaction upon it, or, in other words, our use of it" (SW, 1900, p. 8). Mead holds, that as long as our action towards an object precedes uninterruptedly, we are unaware of the meaning or "content" of this object. But when an object calls out *conflicting* tendencies of action, when, to put it differently, conflicting tendencies deprive the object of its power as a stimulus, we are "thrown back upon an analysis of (our) spontaneous acts and therefore upon the objects which get their content from them" (SW, 1900, p.8). As long as the conflict has not been resolved, our tendencies express *possible* meanings. They present different "values" for which one has not yet sufficient objective validity (SW, 1900, p. 13). Mead argues, that when we focus our attention on these tendencies-which-express-possible-meanings, a conscious solution of the conflict becomes possible. In this situation, experience becomes *psychical* (SW, 1900, pp. 13-14), and it is in this "phase of subjectivity," so Mead argues, that the "individual qua individual", i.e., the *self*, has its functional expression -- or rather "*is* that function" (SW, 1903, p.52; emph. added).

Mead's understanding of individual action gives a consistent account of the *role* of reflective consciousness. It does not yet explain, however, the when and how of its emergence. In his articles from 1900 and 1903 Mead simply seems to assume that human beings possess the ability to direct their attention towards their own tendencies to action -- which, in the most literal sense, is the ability of reflexivity. Only a few years later, Mead abandons the idea of reflexivity as a kind of natural endowment. Here he develops the position that reflective consciousness has a distinctly *social* origin.

Consciousness of meaning

In the 1910-article "Social consciousness and the consciousness of meaning" (Mead, 1910c), Mead discusses the social origin of reflective consciousness in terms of the question under what conditions consciousness of meaning may arise. Given his contention that the meaning of an object is derived from our reaction upon it, it follows that consciousness of meaning is consciousness of this reaction, i.e., "consciousness of attitude, on the part of the individual, over against the object to which he is about to react" (SW, 1910c, p. 125). Consciousness of meaning therefore *is* reflective consciousness.

While the act is the basis of consciousness of attitude, Mead argues that not all

action occasions such consciousness. Where the act has been made "perfect in the habit" (SW, 1910c, p. 129) there is no occasion whatsoever for consciousness of attitude to arise. It is in fact essential to the "economy of our conduct" that the connection between stimulus and response stays *below* the threshold of consciousness (see SW, 1910c, p. 127). Interestingly enough, Mead here also rejects the possibility that consciousness of attitude emerges in a situation where there are conflicting tendencies to act.[10] While the conflict *does* raise the level of consciousness, Mead argues that attention is most likely to be directed towards the objects which constitute the stimulation, and *not* towards "the feels of attitude which reveal our habits of response" (SW, 1910c, p.130). When we are in doubt whether clouds mean rain of fair weather, Mead explains, it is important for the success of our conduct that we are conscious of the signs of rain or fair weather, but *not* of our own attitudes (SW, 1910c, p. 131). There is, however, a situation, where it does become important to focus our attention on our own attitudes. This is the situation of social interaction.

Basically, Mead's understanding of social interaction follows from his understanding of individual action, in that he assumes that we respond to (the acts of) others, just like we respond to physical objects. Mead argues, however, that there is one crucial difference. This lies in the fact that while our reaction towards physical objects has no influence upon these objects -- "a man's reaction toward weather conditions has no influence upon the weather itself" (SW. 1910c, p. 131) -- our reaction towards the acts of others is a stimulus for the other to act in a different way, which in turn is a stimulus for our reaction, etcetera. Social conduct must be continually readjusted after it has already commenced, "because the individuals to whose conduct our own answers, are themselves constantly varying their conduct as our responses become evident." (SW, 1910c, p. 131). That it is in this situation that our own attitudes become the "natural objects" (SW, 1910c, p. 132) of our own attention, is, so Mead argues, because these attitudes are the stimuli for the other to react. Our attitudes "are responsible for the changes in the conduct of other individuals" (SW, 1910c, p. 131). If, therefore, we want to cooperate successfully, it helps -- or, to put it more precise: it is functional -- to focus our attention on the *cause* of the (re)actions of our partners in interaction. And this cause is, of course, our own (re)action. Mead summarizes the point as follows:

Successful social conduct brings one into a field within which a con-

> sciousness of one's own attitudes helps toward the control of the conduct of others. (SW, 1910c, p. 131)

This is the gist of Mead's functional account of the social origin of reflective consciousness. The central claim is, that our acting together, our social interaction, precedes and produces our (reflective) self-consciousness. It should be notes, that this claim rests upon a conception of social interaction in which is assumed that the coordination of action does not require the existence of self-conscious individuals who intentionally direct their cooperation. It is rather the other way around. Mead presents social interaction as a matrix of coordinated action in which we are "implied" or "inscribed." We are, therefore, not in some primordial sense "at the disposal" of ourselves, but rather "find" ourselves in this matrix. We are, then, with others before we are with ourselves. And we *are* ourselves before we become consciously aware of ourselves.

Meaning, symbols and thought

While Mead's account of the social origin of the reflexive "capacity" does make it clear under what conditions we can become the object of our own conscious attention, it does not yet account for the emergence of conscious reflection, i.e., conceptual thought. This requires two further steps in the argument.

We have seen, that Mead's account of social interaction is based upon an understanding of individual action as meaningful action, or action guided by meaning. Like Dewey, Mead rejects an objectivistic understanding of the interaction between organism and environment. He holds, that the organism actively orients himself towards its environment, thereby constructing the "objects-stimulus" (SW, 1903, p. 55) to which he is about the respond. Mead stresses, that this is no sense renders the object subjective. In 1992, he puts it as follows:

> The causal effect of the living organisms on their environment in creating objects is as genuine as the effect of the environment upon the living organism. (SW, 1922, p. 241)

The claim that our actions are meaningful, does not mean, however, that we are conscious of that meaning. It only suggests, that we respond in a certain way -- meaning lies "in the relation of the stimulation to the response" (SE, 1910c, p. 127) -- and that this response can change over time as a result of previous experiences. Using the "well-

worn" example of the child and the candle, Mead argues, that the recurrence in memory of a past disaster insures avoidance of the flame. We might therefore say, that for the child the flame has the meaning of drawing back the hand. Or, to be more precise: the meaning of that to which the child responds *is* drawing-back-the-hand (see SW, 1910c, p. 127). This response is definitely meaningful. The child, however, is not consciously aware of the flame *meaning* his response. An external observer can make a distinction between the flame and its meaning for the child, so that the flame can be seen as a *symbol* for drawing back the hand. For the child there is only the immediate response. For him, there is no conscious distinction between "the thing" and "what it means".

Following Mead's behavioral theory of meaning, it is, however, not difficult to imagine what ought to happen for the child -- or any actor in general -- to be able to present the thing and what it means separately. For Mead, the meaning of the "object-stimulus" is one's own attitude towards it. This means, that as soon as an actor is able to direct his attention towards his own attitude, he is in a situation where he can make the distinction between the thing and what it means. When this has happened -- and we already know that it is social interaction which occasions this to happen -- the thing has become a *symbol*. Because this makes it possible to *use* things as meaning other things, this, so Mead holds, opens up the possibility for conscious reflection (conceptual thought) (see SW, 1909, p. 102).

The conversation of gestures

There is, however, one complicating factor, because if the situation in which reflective consciousness emerges is the social situation, the first objects with respect to which the distinction between the object and what it means are made, are not the physical objects of the child-candle example, but "social objects" (SW, 1909, p. 98).[11] How, then, can we become consciously aware of the meaning of the actions of others?

Mead notes, that Baldwin and Royce had suggested that the answer to this question was to be found in instinctive tendencies to *imitation*. While it might happen that the activities of one individual bring forth similar activities in another, Mead sees no justification for the assumption that this process is one of imitation. As soon as we acknowledge that in social interaction individuals react to each other's actions, it becomes highly unlikely that "the conduct of one form should as act as a stimulus to do,

not what the situation calls for, but something like that which the first [individual] is doing" (SW, 1909, p. 100) *If* imitation is to play a role in social interaction, Mead further argues, this can only be the case where a consciousness of other selves already exists. To explain the emergence of such a consciousness by means of imitation "is putting the cart before the horse" (SW, 1909, p. 101).

While Mead gives an account of social interaction in terms "social stimulation and response" (SW, 1909, p. 101) and not in terms of imitation, he introduces one crucial element to distinguish his view from a conception which sees social interaction as merely a process of stimulation and response. Mead argues, that social interaction is not sequential but rather anticipatory. To articulate this idea, he makes use of the notion of *gesture*, which had first been spelled out in Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*.[12] A gesture is the first "overt phase" in a social act; a social act is one "in which one individual serves in his action as a stimulus to a response from another individual (SW, 1910c, p. 123). The adaptation of individuals to each other implies that their conduct calls out "appropriate and valuable responses" from each other. Mead argues that such an adjustment naturally leads to the earlier stages of the act, because "the more perfect the adaptation of the conduct of a social form the more readily it would be able to determine its actions by the first indications of an act in another form" (SW, 1910c, p.123).

If we look at social interaction from this point of view, is becomes clear that in the "conversation of gestures" individuals do not adjust themselves to each other's actions as such, but to what they expect that the (beginning) action of the other will lead to. Precisely in this sense we can say that Mead's account of social interaction reveals that it is meaningful interaction, because the response are made towards what the beginning acts (gestures) *mean*. The meaningful response does not yet require consciousness of meaning. Gestures are significant, Mead argues, "before they come to have significance of conscious meaning" (SW, 1910a, p. 110).

Wundt had maintained that gestures were an expression of emotion, and from this point of view he had developed a theory of language which regarded language as an outgrowth of (vocal) gestures. For Mead, this again puts the cart before the horse. He argues, that the origin of the meaning of gestures is not subjective but rather *intersubjective*.

> It is evident that but for the original situation of social interaction ... gestures could never have attained their signification. It is their reference to other individuals that has turned expression, as a mere outflow of nervous excitement, into meaning, and this meaning was the value of the act for the other individual, and his response ... gave the first basis for communication, for common understanding, for the recognition of the attitude which men mutually held toward each other within a field of social interaction (SW, 1909, p. 102).

For Mead, social interaction is not the expression of individual, private meanings; it rather is a meaning-making, i.e., a creative and therefore radically undetermined event.

The meaning of the gesture

Against this background we can see that for Mead the question of the emergence of consciousness of meaning in a social situation in fact consists of two question. One is how we can become consciously aware of the meaning of the gestures of our partners in interaction; the other is, how we can become consciously aware of the meaning of our own gestures. That these are two different questions, is because they depict two different combinations of the thing and what it means. In the first instance the "thing" is the gesture of the other, and my attitude towards it is its meaning. In the second instance, the "thing" is my own gesture, and its meaning lies the response of the other. Gestures, then, have a double status, in that they are both a stimulus to the response of the other, and an interpretation of the gestures of the other. The "feels of one's own responses," Mead writes, "interpret first of all attitudes of others which have called them out", and secondly, "give the material in which one can state his own value as a stimulus to the conduct of others" (SW, 1910c, p. 132).

The first question is not all too difficult to answer, because it basically follows the same pattern as the emergence of consciousness of meaning of physical objects. As soon as we direct our attention towards our own attitude, we are in a position to consider "the thing" (the other's gesture) and "what it means" (our attitude) separately. The other's gesture has then become a "social object", being "the early indications of an ongoing social act in another plus the imagery of our own response to that stimulation" (SW, 1910c, p. 132). In the social situation, Mead concludes, we therefore find both the

opportunity and the *means* "for analyzing and bringing to consciousness our responses ... as distinguished from the stimulations that call them out" (SW, 1910c, p. 132).

Taking the attitude of the other

The second question -- how we can become aware of the (intersubjective) meaning of our own gestures -- appears to be much more difficult to answer. As a matter of fact, Mead's remarks and suggestions about this issue do not add up to one consistent account (see also Cook, 1993, p. 90). The main difficulty has to do with Mead's notion of the vocal gesture. Mead introduces this notion in his discussion about the emergence of consciousness of meaning of one's own gestures. He argues, that in order to make the distinction between one's own gestures and its meaning, we need "an image ... of the response, which the gesture of one form will bring out in another... The meaning can only appear in imaging the consequence of the gesture." (SW, 1910a, p. 111) The image as such has no more "meaning value" than an external stimulus. But, so Mead argues, because in the conversation of gestures there is also "a consciousness of attitude", the image is not merely a stimulus to act, but becomes merged with the gesture so that it can become the *meaning* of that gesture (SW, 1910a, p. 111). While this gives a better idea of the process involved in the emergence of consciousness of the meaning of one's own gestures, the question that still needs to be answered is where we get the image of the response which the gesture will bring out in another.

In "The mechanism of social consciousness" (1912) Mead introduces the notion of the vocal gesture as his answer this question. He notes, that the crucial thing about the vocal gesture is, that it is perceived in the same way by the individual who produces it, as it is by the one who listens (SW, 1912, p. 137). This means, that "the human animal can stimulate himself as he stimulates others and can respond to this stimulation as he responds to the stimulations of others" (SW, 1912, p. 139). Mead assumes, that the vocal gesture -- or the mechanism of self-stimulation more generally -- makes it possible to do that what he refers to as *taking the attitude of the other* (see SW, 1913, p. 146). In this way, then, can we get an image of the response which our gesture will bring out in another. And precisely this is need for consciousness of meaning of one's own gestures to arise.

While this is an answer to the question where we can get an image of the

response that our gesture will bring about, it is a problematic answer. The problem is, that there only exists a guarantee that one's own reaction to the vocal gesture is similar to the reaction of the other when social interaction is a process of pre-programmed imitation. As this is not the case for Mead, the vocal gesture cannot simply do the job that Mead suggests that it can perform. In a text from 1913 Mead solves the problem by simply assuming that we have "memory-images of the responses of those about us:, and that in responding to ourselves these images "naturally" flow into our reaction. This, of course, does not solve the problem, because the question then still is how we acquire these images. Mead takes up the issue again in an article from 1922 (as a matter of fact the first article since 1922 to deal with these issues). Here, he introduces the notion of the "generalized other", and argues that we just need to acquire the attitudes "which all assume in given conditions and over against the same objects" in order for meaning to become "general" (SW, 1922, p. 245). It takes another few years before Mead finally recognizes that "in a complex social act ... the stimulus to another individual to [someone's] response is not as a rule fitted to call out the tendency to the same response in the individual himself" (SW, 1924/25, p. 279), yet he still assumes that the vocal gesture can bridge this gap (see SW, 1924/25, p. 287).

The only way possible out of this predicament -- a way which Mead does not explore in his published writings in this period -- is by raising the question that occupied such a central place in his earlier texts, viz., to imagine the situation in which it is functional that the way in which we respond to our own stimulations is in some way similar to the actual response of the other. This is, of course, the situation of social cooperation. Mead observes, that

> If we are to cooperate successfully with others, we must in some manner get their ongoing acts into ourselves to make the common act come off (SW, 1924/25, p. 279).

If we grant that the mechanism of self-stimulation performs an anticipatory role, in that it offers us an image of the (possible) response of the other to our gestures and therefore helps to anticipate that gesture, we can conclude that there is a functional "premium" for those responses to our own gestures that are similar to the responses of the other. In this way, we might get the "ongoing acts" of others into ourselves.

Summary

To summarize: Mead's break with the "false psychology of individual consciousness" is based upon a conception of human action as meaningful action and upon a corresponding behavioral conception of meaning. Mead argues that it is the social situation which occasions the emergence of consciousness of attitude. Following the behavioral conception of meaning, consciousness of attitude is consciousness of meaning or reflective consciousness. Conceptual thought, which relies upon the ability to make the distinction between "the thing" and "what it means," also relies upon consciousness of attitude and therefore has a distinctly social origin too. This implies, that the first objects we become consciously aware of, are "social objects." Mead discusses the question of the meaning of social objects, i.e., the question how we can become consciously aware of the meaning of the acts of others and our own acts, on the basis of an account of social interaction as both meaningful and meaning-making interaction. It is in this "conversation of gestures," and by means of the mechanism of self-stimulation, that we can take -- or to be more precise: anticipate -- the attitude of the other.

Course 50: Philosophy of Education

Mead's early writings clearly reveal his efforts to articulate an account of human subjectivity which takes its point of departure in what happens "in between" human beings (intersubjectivity). Mead not only shows how reflective consciousness emerges within social interaction. He also redefines social interaction itself, viz., as a meaning-making and therefore radically undetermined event. It is a matrix of coordinated action that is not constituted by (self-conscious) subjects, but rather constitutes (reflective) subjectivity.

In this section I want to examine the pedagogical implications of these ideas. What do they imply for the way we conceive of education? And what do they imply for the practice of education? To find an answer to these questions, or, as a matter of fact, to find *Mead's* answer, I will discuss the typescript of the course on Philosophy of Education which Mead gave in the College of Education of the University of Chicago in the Spring of 1911.

Mead's course on Philosophy of Education

In the *Annual Register* of the University of Chicago of 1909-1910 (containing the program for 1910-1911) Mead's course -- "primarily for graduate students" -- is listed as Course 50. The course-description reads as follows.

> **Philosophy of Education** -- The point of view will be that of the gradual socialization of the child, and the part which education plays in this. Both formal and informal education will be considered, especially in their relation to each other. On the one side the development of the child will be considered as the justification for a psychological theory of education, while on the other side the demands of the society into which the child is entering, will suggest the sociological theory. The inadequacies of each will be indicated, and the necessity of replacing them by a social conception of education which can recognize both the child and society at once. The chief features of present school practice and theory will be criticized from this standpoint.[13]

The typescript of the course consists of 196 numbered pages, containing a description of 37 Lectures, and three added pages, containing some summarizing remarks. It was compiled by Gallate Hammond, a student in the Graduate School of Arts, Literature, and Science (*Annual Register* 1910-1991, p. 495). She also compiled a typescript of Mead's course on "Logic of Social Science".[14]

While it was not uncommon for professors to appoint students to take notes of their courses and make typescripts of these notes -- the George Herbert Mead Papers contain about twenty sets of student notes and typescripts of Mead's courses -- and although it was neither uncommon that these typescripts were checked by those who gave the course, there is no information about the reliability of the typescript of this course. The fact that it contains pencil marks which sometimes substantially change the content of what is typed, suggests that the typescript was checked, but it is now known who has done this.

In the following reconstruction I will, however, assume that the typescript is in general reliable, both as an account of Mead's course and -- more importantly -- as an account of the ideas Mead held. While it is conceivable, that a course on Philosophy of Education does not express the ideas of the person giving the course, this typescript

clearly reveals Mead's attempts to spell out the pedagogical implications of his ideas about human action and, more specifically, about the social origin of reflective consciousness. Because the typescript is only available in the archives of the University of Chicago, I have chosen to stay as close as possible to the original text, for which reason I will quote substantially. Every quotation has both a reference to the page number and the number of the lecture where it is taken from.

The social character of education

It is not difficult to see the connection between Mead's more general work and his course in Philosophy of Education. While Mead touches upon a wide variety of topics, most if not all of them are related to the theme of the emergence of reflective consciousness within the field of education. Mead's central claim is, that education *is* social interaction, or, in a more precise formulation, that "all interaction with children is in communication" (IXV, p. 84). The exploration of the social or communicative character of education is both the focus of Mead's course and, so he[15] suggests, the perspective for philosophy of education in general.

> The function of communication in education and of education in communication is the central point in the philosophy of education. (XIII, p. 76)

Mead explores the social character of education along two related lines: the social origin of *thought* and the social origin of *meaning*. With respect to the first issue, Mead characteristically argues that "the social relationship comes before thought," so that we cannot assume that the intellectual processes which we use for education are already "going on" (XIV, p. 84). The "problem of education ... is that of introducing a method of thought" (XXXV, p. 186). This method, Mead stresses, "is not a thing that can be transferred", but a thing "which one must gain for himself" (XXXIII, p. 174). With respect to the second issue, Mead holds that "meanings grow out of social intercourse" (*95[16]). When applied to the child, this implies that "we can't possibly give a dictionary definition and expect him to get the meaning," but that the child must get the meaning through his own response to "certain social situations" (*95). Education then comes back to "producing a social situation" (XXII, p. 128). Mead observes, that we have not realized that the body of ideas is affected by the manner of transmitting them. Yet he wants to make clear that this is one of the main implications of the recognition

of the social origin of meaning. He therefore states in his opening lecture:

> We will view education, not only as a method of giving a body of facts to the rising generation, but we shall also consider the effect, which the process of handing down has had on the material itself (I, p. 3).

The stages of the act

Mead takes his point of departure in an account of human action which clearly relies upon Dewey's critique of the reflex arc. He argues, that in the human infant we find a relatively long period of *plasticity*, i.e., "a condition in which the tendencies to act are comparatively fixed, but the stimuli which will set them off, have not as yet been determined" (II, p. 7). Contrary to the "traditional" conception where the stimulus is considered to be the *cause* of the response, Mead stresses that the motor process is "a seeking of expression," so that "the stimulus does not force the reaction but is a stimulus for the reaction" (XVII, p. 100). We actively organize these occasions for reaction (and thereby "mediate" our activities) by means of the construction of objects (see XVI, p. 93), i.e., "we control our conduct by determining the objects to which we will respond" (II, p. 8) The human infant thus both has instincts and the "power of consciously constructing the objects to which these instincts shall react" (II, p. 10). This power, so Mead argues, is "the key to conscious education" (II, p. 10), not only because we control our own conduct through the conscious construction of those objects to which we will respond, but also because we "train our children ... to choose the stimuli for their acts" (II, p. 8).

Mead uses this "goal-seeking" (and in a sense teleological) account of human action to make a distinction between "old education" and his own approach. Old education, he argues, has "neglected," and even "wiped out" the attitude of the child (XVI, p. 92). But this attitude is indispensable, because "the whole of the technique of the process ... does not turn on the material provided by elders, but falls around the response of the child to this material" (XVI, p. 92). This obviously raises the question how, and to what extent, we can "organize" the response of the child. Mead develops an answer to this question along two different lines. On the one hand he gives an ontogenetic account of the development of the act. In this context he discusses both the social origin of meaning and the social origin of thought. On the other hand, the course

contains a distinct phylogenetic line of thought. This, as I will show, mainly serves to discuss the pedagogically relevant question how we can communicate traditions, ideas and methods.

The ontogenesis of the act

In the ontogenetic account of the development of human action -- "a more or less psychological statement of the act" (XIV, p. 81) -- Mead introduces the (by now familiar) distinction between the situation where the relationship between stimulus and response is not obstructed and thus takes place "unreflectively, unconsciously," and the situation where inhibition arises, i.e., "where the habitual is checked." The latter situation, he holds, "involves the development of consciousness" (see VII, p. 46).[17]

Mead argues, that "inhibition carries with it an affective state" (VII, p. 47). When the readjustment is immediate we have no emotion. When the adjustment is easily made, it carries with it the affective state of *interest*. When "the inhibition holds, checks, for a longer time, we have an *emotion*" (VII, p. 47; emph. added). Emotion is the first stage in the development of the act, the other two being the aesthetic and the intellectual stage (see XIV, p. 82). Mead also refers to the emotional stage as the stage of "immediate perception"; the intellectual stage presents the "attitude of analysis" (VIII, p. 48).[18]

What precedes the aesthetic phase -- and thereby the perception of the "aesthetic object" -- "is that element which simply serves as a stimulus and sets the reaction free" (X, p. 62). We must remember, Mead stresses, "that the selection of sensuous experience (the work of attention [sic]), is due to our reaction" (X, p. 62; emph. in original). This means, that the "working image as stimulus to which we attend, is not a complete physical object which is held before consciousness, but only enough sensuous content to start the reaction" (X, p. 63). In the *emotional phase* there is, therefore, not yet a perception of objects. Yet the emotional phase is a necessary phase, because we cannot get the object "without the emotional response," as it is this response "which holds one to the object" (XIV, p. 83). Mead observes, that psychologists like "Dewey, Angell, Wundt and James" agree sufficiently "that emotion is the beginning of the object" (XIV, p. 83).

In the *aesthetic phase* "attention is turned to the object to find out just what it is" (XIV, p. 82). In this phase the object of perception is constructed as an "aesthetic

object" or "sensuous whole" (VIII, p. 50). The aesthetic object it not (no longer) simply a stimulus to a reaction. It is, however, neither (not yet) an object of use (see VIII, p. 51). It is, in Mead's own words, "more an intuition" (VIII, p. 50).

The third phase is the *intellectual phase*, the phase of "dissecting" and "analyzing." Mead stresses, that this "intellectual weighing analysis" does not follow for its own sake, "but for the sake of acting with reference to the object" (XIV, p. 83). The intellectual attitude "constructs an object for activity" (XIV, p. 84). Just like the emotional phase is preparatory for the aesthetic phase, the aesthetic phase is preparatory for the intellectual phase in that the aesthetic object organizes our perception before reflection takes place (see XVI, p. 96).

Mead claims, that the intellectual process is "essentially social" in character (XIV, p. 81; XXXI, p. 166). His argument comes down to the claim that reflection is dependent upon language and the claim that language arises out of social interaction. Or, in more technical terms, that conceptual thought is dependent upon consciousness of meaning, and that "consciousness of meaning arises only in intercourse with others" (XXXI, p. 166). The "social relationship" thus comes before thought. Or, to put it the other way around: "thought arises out of the consciousness of social relationship..." (XIV, p. 84-85).

The social origin of meaning

Mead argues that the term which recalls that consciousness of meaning has a social origin, is the term *attitude*, because "attitude is both identified with meaning on the one side, and with gesture on the other" (XXXI, p. 166) With respect to meaning Mead states that "the meaning of an object is our attitude toward it", and that, as a rule, "the attitude makes itself evident as a consciousness of readiness to act" (XXXI, p. 166). The attitude is, however, also the beginning of the act, and in this respect the "attitude is the gesture, i.e., it is that phase in the act which is significant to other forms" (XXXI, p. 167).[19] Gestures, then, are "acts inhibited at the point where they have meaning for the other form, i.e. at the beginning of the act" (III, p. 15). Gestures "stand for certain things, what is going to happen, -- symbol" (XII, p. 74). For the actor this meaning is firstly implicit. "The actor has the concept, this is the consciousness of meaning that the observer has." (XV, p. 86) *Consciousness* of meaning arises out of one's own act or

readiness to act, but refers to someone else, i.e., "it appears as a response to the conduct, of another" (XV, p. 86). This means, that consciousness of meaning is "consciousness of attitude and its relationship to an on-coming act" (XV, p. 86). Mead summarizes this as follows:

> We have discussed gesture from the point of view of communication and from the standpoint of concept, consciousness of meaning. We have seen that its function is a communication and it is the foundation of concept. We have seen that symbol is an attitude and is a part of gesture. (XIII, p. 76)

The attitude, then, is that which not only becomes gesture but which also becomes "language in its more restricted sense" (XXXI, p. 167).[20] This means that all language is "inhibition of the act with the overt indication of the attitude which the act involved, and the use of this overt indication is a social stimulus" (XXXI, p. 168). Which in turn means, that *language* is "social in character and depends upon social stimulation" and that all *thinking* "is always conversing" (XXXI, p. 168).

Mead's claim about the social -- or intersubjective -- origin of meaning implies, among other things, that "the idea is not first of all in consciousness and then conveyed to others by an arbitrary set of symbols, but [that] the meaning of our own attitude toward another is interpreted in terms of the attitude of another toward ourselves" (XXII, p. 124-125). If it is true, that gestures do not have a meaning of their own but "get a value" (XXII, p. 121) in social interaction, this has important implications for education. Not only does it mean, that "before the child can get the meaning of any thought he must get it in a social situation" (XXII, p. 130). It also, and primarily means, that if we conceive of education from the point of view of "the conveying of meanings" (XXXVII, p. 37), we must acknowledge that "the material" of education "itself is the product of a social relationship" (XXXVII, p. 191), a social relationship -- and this, to my mind, is crucial -- in which the child itself is included.

> Language is a social process, and in such social process alone can the child construct the meanings which he acquires. (XXXVII, p. 194)

"Unfortunately," Mead remarks, "education has been confined to the artificial process of taking language and giving it as such to the pupils" (XXXVII, p. 190-191). But meanings are not "already there" and need only be assimilated by the child. We must

realize, he stresses, "that meaning arises only through the reaction of the learner (XXXVII, p. 190). If education is not social, then "we can simply give a lesson" -- and "this latter has been the point of view" (XXII, p. 127). "Shall we assume," Mead asks,

> that the mind is an organ in the body like the stomach or intestines and that it works over what it is given? This is an easy way to take and then teaching will be the furnishing of material. (XXII, p. 127-128)

But when we acknowledge that meanings grow out of social intercourse, that "they are not there and then expressed," we have to recognize that "what the child requires is not poured into a receptacle" but that "meaning must arise in the child's consciousness in some sort of intercourse with others." The child "must get the meaning thru [sic] his own response to certain social situations." (*95-*96)

From his account of the social origin of meaning Mead draws two pedagogically relevant consequences. The first is, that because the process of "getting meaning" is not "a reproduction of the acts of another," i.e., not a process of *imitation*[21], but a process of social interaction or communication, i.e., a process in which the younger generation is not "fixed" by the older, that "the very process of acquiring, changes the thing acquired" (XXVIII, p. 156). Because the subject matter of education is a social product, *change* of this subject matter is the rule, not the exception. The second implication is simple but crucial: if education is social, "then the social situation must be ... created" (XXII, p. 127).

The social origin of thought

We have already seen, that Mead argues that reflective thought "arises out of a conflict between different possible ways of reacting to an object" (XXXIII, p. 175). We have also seen, that Mead distinguishes three phases in the development of the act: the emotional, the aesthetic and the analytical or intellectual phase. In the latter phase, conceptual thought has its place. Given the fact that conceptual thought relies upon consciousness of meaning, and consciousness of meaning has a social origin, we can understand why Mead holds that the intellectual process is itself "essentially social" in character (see XIV, p. 81).

Mead introduces the three phases as three stages in the development of the act. He argues, however, that the phases can also be seen as three possible ways to react,

three possible ways to attempt to resolve the conflict. In that case, "each way of reacting corresponds to a phase of the object" (XXXIII, p. 175). This means that the emergence of a reflective solution of the conflict is a possibility but not a necessity. Mead discusses this point both from a psychological and a historical, i.e., from an ontogenetic and a phylogenetic perspective. The stages of the development of the act, he holds, "are parallel to those of race and individual" (XIV, p. 81-82). This does not imply that Mead endorses the idea that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis (the so called Culture Epoch Theory; III, p. 13). This theory, Mead argues, "has been discredited from the point of view of the child and from the point of view of the race," the main argument being, that "the education of the child in what we called civilized society takes place in a type of social environment which is quite different from that which exists in a primitive state of society" (III, p. 13). While, then, there is no necessity that a reflective solution of the conflict emerges, this is a cultural possibility. Mead discusses this as follows.

He first notes, that the "process of thinking" consists itself of three stages: "(1) the problem phase, (2) the formulation of some hypothesis by means of which the problem is to be met (...) and (3) the phase of experimentation, of testing" (XXXIII, p. 177). To get this process going, *abstraction* is needed. While abstraction may arise out of the conflict -- "The process of thinking depends upon a problem; the presentation of the whole object and the abstraction of a new element. This is the first stage of abstraction." (XXXIII, p. 176) -- Mead argues that there is no guarantee that the initial abstractions are made into "data" for conscious reflection.

> In the case of the primitive mind and that of the child, the abstraction arises out of the conflict; but instead of these being made data the imagination clothes these elements in the form of a myth, or as spirit, and one gets almost directly to action again. (XXXV, p. 185)

From the perspective of the social origin of thought, Mead defines the problem of education therefore as "the avoiding of this short cut from abstraction to imagination, and putting in its place the full process of thought" (XXXV, p. 185). The problem of education, in other words, "is that of introducing a method of thought." (XXXV, p. 186) This method "is not a thing that can be transferred only, it is a thing which one must gain for himself" (XXXIII, p. 175). It is a method in which the individual must be

trained, but "the training must arise out of his own experience (...) It must arise out of problems within the child himself, for he is responsible for making his own abstraction. (...) He can't take over abstractions. (...) For a child to make use of abstraction they must have been made by himself." (XXXIII, p. 178)

This, once again shows that the response of the child is crucial for education. "The statement of the method," Mead explains, "is conditioned by the experience of those who are to receive it." (XXXIII, p. 178). While it is true, that "the abstraction must arise in [the child's] own thought process" (XXXIV, p. 181), Mead doubts whether this implies that there is no longer a role for "drill," i.e., for occupying the child with "abstract material" (see XXXIV, p. 181). "We recognize," Mead argues, "that the use of school discipline as a means of accomplishing a mental fact" is not an effective way. A solution has been sought, he adds, "in making the child's study of number and a language depend upon the uses which the child is to put number and language, i.e., have the child construct a box, measure it off etc. and get the numerical relation in actual use. But abundant proof has shown that this does not give the drill necessary." (XXXIV, p. 182) While it is important, then, to use number under the conditions "natural to the child" it is also important to go "beyond the natural" (XXXIV, p. 183). The point is, that "if the child never used language except to satisfy his needs, he never would get control of it" (XXXIV, p. 183). The child "babbles" all the time, so there must be "a larger exercise than mere use" (XXXIV, p. 183). The "psychological problem" is under what conditions this exercise takes place. While he acknowledges that there comes a time when the child has, e.g., a natural interest in going through manipulations of number, "we must not feel that they get the inner meaning of number" (XXXIV, p. 183). Here, then, do we find another dimension of the problem of education, i.e., "it [education] arises in the middle of abstract elements" and yet the child is not able to deal with these elements "theoretically" (XXXIV, p. 183).

While it is, therefore, "essentially the task of educational instruction" to consciously formulate "the traditions, ideas and methods" that have been developed in the past, and to embody them in such a form "that they can be readily communicated" (XXVIII, p. 156), we already know that "before the child can get the meaning of any thought he must get it in a social situation," and -- even more importantly -- that this is a situation which involves "his own experience" (XXII, p. 130). This means, that "the

attitude one generation takes toward another, i.e., teacher and pupil, toward the traditions, the objects etc. (...) is the attitude of instruction" (XXVIII, p. 156), so that, as we have already seen, education comes back to producing a social situation in which, because the child is part of the situation, "the very process of acquiring, changes the thing acquired" (XXVIII, p. 156).

Education as explanation

There is one further theme that occupies a central place in Mead's course; a theme that has to do with the question how we can communicate the traditions, ideas and methods of the past. Mead tries to find an answer to this question by means of a kind of historical account of the development of human culture from the state of "primitive people" to the state of "modern society". The crucial distinction in this account is between "cult" and "myth".[22] "We know," Mead argues, "of two sides of the training of the children of primitive peoples; one is represented by play, and the other takes the form of initiation, which is of a more formal character" (IV, p. 15). Initiation "is about the only educational institution that primitive people have" (IV, p. 17). Mead stresses, that initiation ceremonies can not be arbitrarily undertaken, but must be "part of the community". The "mysteries" in which the child is instructed take the form of cult and myth (see IV, p. 20). "Myths," Mead explains, "are very late explanations of old cults which have lost their significance" (V, p. 22). A cult is a "social habit" identified with "the most primitive impulses of the community" (VI, p. 32). Myths arise, when the original "context of origin" of the cult has changed. Myths serve, therefore, two functions: "the explanation of a lost import," and "giving lager significance to the import" (VI, p. 34). The myth "attempts to account for a cult that is lost to the people who seek its explanation" (VII, p. 41). To this, Mead adds that the nature of education is "of course" to be found largely within explanation (VII, p. 41-42).

We have already seen, that Mead holds that the stages of the development of the act "are parallel to those of race and individual" (XV, p. 81-82). Mead argues, therefore, that cult and myth represent respectively the emotional and the aesthetic phase of the development of the act. Cult and myth "are means by which the primitive man constructs the full sensuous image" (X, p. 64). The function of myth, Mead argues, "is that of imagination, the construction of an object which will set the subjective activities free,

give it expression." (XVI, p. 94)

> The original function of the myth arising out of the problem situation is to mediate the technique of the cult. The myth may develop for its own sake into poetry and storytelling, an artistic process." (XVI, p. 94-94)

Mead stresses that the myth is not just in the general sense the way in which primitive peoples explain cults; the myth is *the* educational means of primitive peoples.

> It is not then only that myth takes material and passes it on to other generations, but the material itself has arises our of an educative process, i.e., the adult, or those who know, make the others at home in the new situation. (XVIII, p. 104-105)

This, Mead holds, is exactly what we do with the child, "pushing him farther into the unknown and supporting him by making him at home there" (XVIII, p. 105). Mead observes that the function of myth has also to do with the fact -- which we have already seen in it psychological form above -- that play, i.e., "acquiring of technique by placing self in the place of adult" (XIX, p. 105) is not sufficient for acquiring the "tradition of the community". Here, "more or less definite instruction is necessary," i.e., "the material must be learned" as it cannot be "picked up" (XIX, p. 105-106).

Given Mead's account of the development of the act, it will not come as a surprise that there is a third stage in the development of human culture. This is the stage of *science*, which, according to Mead, starts with the Greeks, i.e., with Thales. Mead explains, that here the myth "is taken away from the particular incidents of which they grew" (XX, p. 112). The Greeks *generalize* techniques that in other cultures were "still in the cult." They introduce, in other words, "an abstract process" (XXI, p. 117). They were interested in techniques "apart from their social function" and this interest, so Mead claims, "is responsible in part at least for rise of science" (XXI, p. 119). It was, Mead assumes, the fact that cults were losing their significance because their expression in daily life changes, that made necessary "an abstraction" (XXIII, p. 133).

The "next step," Mead notes, "is the putting of the generalization into a usable form, -- a hypothesis" (XXIV, p. 138). The Greeks never reached this stage, and so, Mead adds, "the child can hardly be said to get thus far before the secondary period of school life" (XXIV, p. 138). It was, however, Socrates, Mead argues, who brought the whole process one step further with his discovery of "the universal, -- our concept"

(XXVII, p. 152). This was a step toward "the experimental method," although "this was never fully developed in Greece" (XXVII, p. 150). It was Galileo who "definitely stated [the] scientific method" (XXIX, p. 161). He broke away from the ancient world by introducing the idea that the "law of change" is given "in the change itself" (XXX, p. 164).

> Our modern science then depends upon this process of finding within the change 'process' itself, the law of that change, and then using this law to define its objects.(XXX, p. 164)

Mead notes, that the object constructed in this process is not the "whole object" (XXX, p. p. 165), i.e., it is not the aesthetic object.

Mead sums up his historical account of the development of human culture by noting that "in different periods of history, emphasis has been laid on the different phases [of the act]" (XXXIII, p. 177-178), and by arguing that "the method today is to bring all these phases into its method" (XXXIII, p. 178). It is this method, as we have already seen, in which the individual must be trained "and the training must arise out of his own experience" (XXXIII, p. 178). The process of education, then, "is essentially the process of early science" (XXVII, p. 150), and it is in "the child-parent relation or similar situations" that "explanation or analysis" emerges, so that "education and explanation are essential to each other" (XXXII, p. 170).

Conclusion: A social conception of education

Mead's description for the course on Philosophy of Education gives a helpful clue for characterizing his position. While he acknowledges that the development of the child seems to justify a psychological theory of education, and the demands of society suggest a sociological approach, he considers both options to be inadequate. Instead he proposes "a *social conception of education* which can recognize both the child and society at once" (*Annual Register* 1905-1906, p. 139; emph. added).

This social conception is not a sociological conception, in that it does not conceive of education from the point of view of "the demands of the society into which the child is entering." What Mead tries to make clear, is that the situation of education is not one where the child stands opposite to society, but where the child takes part in society from the very first day of its life onwards. This means, to put it simply, that

society changes -- or, as a matter of fact, has already changed -- as soon as the child enters the stage. The child, then, does not exist "outside" of the social situation, but is part of it.

Against this background, we can see why Mead also distinguishes his position from a psychological conception. After all, he holds that the child does not enter the social stage with a fully developed psychological "apparatus," but that reflective consciousness emerges *in* the social situation. We can summarize Mead's position, therefore, in the claim that education *is* social interaction, as long as we are aware of the fact that Mead has a quite specific understanding of social interaction as, to put it briefly, a "matrix" of coordinated action.

The simple claim that education *is* social interaction -- or, in Mead's own words, that education comes back to "producing a social situation" -- has some far-reaching consequences. First of all, if education *is* social interaction, this means that education is not something that precedes social interaction and only makes it possible. Education is not, then, an introduction into society or culture so that thereupon "real" social interaction can take place. Or, to be more precise, it is not such an introduction by any other means *than* social interaction. This is the import of Mead's remark that we can't possibly give the child a dictionary definition and expect him to get the meaning, but that the child must get the meaning through his own response to a social situation.

Mead's contention that education comes back to *producing* a social situation (XXII, p. 128), i.e., that the social situation of education must be "created" (XXII, p. 127), might seem to contradict the claim that education *is* social interaction. That this is evidently not case, becomes clear as soon as we acknowledge that an adult can never produce a social situation on his own, but that the social situation can only exist *between* the adult and the child (or between adults and children) -- hence *inter*subjectivity. If this is so, then Mead's claim that meanings grow out of social intercourse has crucial implications for the way we conceive of the content or "material" of education and its role in education.

The point is, first of all, that the content or material of education "is the product of a social relationship" (XXXVII, p. 191), which means that this content does not exist independently of this relationship but, as a matter of fact, only exists *between* human beings. it is for this reason, that Mead argues that the meaning of any thought can only

be acquired "in a social situation" (XXII, p. 130). To my mind, the most crucial dimension of Mead's social conception of education lies, however, in the recognition that the child is itself one of the "constituting elements" of the social situation. This is, e.g., expressed in the remark that

> the whole of the technique of the process ... does not turn on the material provided by elders, but falls around the response of the child to this material (XVI, p. 92).

While this could be interpreted as a child-centered conception of education -- or more correctly as a "response-centered" conception of education -- we should not forget that education concerns the response of the child in a social situation. This response necessarily causes change of the material or content of education, which finally reveals that education is not a neutral "medium" for the conveyance of meaning, but a social practice which is inherently creative and therefore inherently transformative.

Discussion

In the preceding pages I have given a reconstruction of Mead's social conception of education on the basis of the typescript of his Philosophy of Education course, and against the background of his early writings on human action, social interaction and the social origin of reflective consciousness. I have argued that Mead's position can be summarized in the claim that education *is* social interaction, provided that social interaction is understood in the way in which Mead conceives of it.

From the claim that education *is* social interaction, four consequences follow. (1) If education is social interaction, than it is not a kind of interaction that precedes "real" social interaction and only makes such interaction possible. In so far as education is preparation for future social interaction, this can only be done by means of social interaction. (2) Even when Mead argues that education comes down to *producing* a social situation, we must recognize that the child is as much a partner of this situation as the adult is. We might say, that in a sense the social situation only exists *in between* the child and the adult. (3) Because Mead conceives of social interaction in terms of the coordination of action and the conversation of gestures, it follows that there are no

specific skills required to participate in social interaction. As a matter of fact, it is the other way around: because we are "implied" or "inscribed" in the intersubjective matrix of social interaction, we are able to acquire (reflexive) communicative skills and competencies in the first place. (4) Just as a social situation only exists *in between* the child and the adult, Mead's position also implies that the content of education only exists *in between* the child and the adult. For Mead the content of education -- or "culture" more generally -- has no independent and objective existence. It is not an entity that stands opposed to the child. Culture is located *in between* human beings.

I want to argue that these four implications provide important building blocks for the development of an intersubjective conception of education, i.e., a conception which does not start from individual self-conscious human beings, but rather takes its point of departure in the "sphere" of intersubjectivity. The development of such a conception of education is, of course, a task that lies well beyond the scope of this paper. Contrary to Schaller, who considers Mead's work only of limited relevance for the development of what he refers to as a "communicative pedagogy" (Schaller, 1987, p. 58), I do think, however, that Mead's position is a "helpful paradigm" for this task.

I want to stress, that although Mead's social conception of education argues that education *is* social interaction and that the child is a full partner in this process, this does not mean that education *should* be participatory, that it should, e.g., be a dialogue or an ideal speech situation. To my understanding, Mead's work concerns the intersubjective "foundations" of education. Mead's claims about the social character of education have to be reckoned with in any educative situation, even those situations which, from a "traditional" point of view, are referred to as indoctrination (see Biesta, 1996b).

While the foregoing reconstruction has revealed some not generally known dimensions of Mead's educational thought, I do believe that further reconstructive work is needed, especially with respect to Mead's claim about the social origin of conceptual thought. As far as I have been able to see, neither his early "psychological" writings nor his course on Philosophy of Education provide a conclusive account of this process. Further work along these lines will not only provide a more complete understanding of Mead's position, but will also provide further material for answering the question about the intellectual influence between Mead and Dewey -- another theme beyond the scope

of this paper.

To conclude this paper, I want to make a few remarks about the relationship between Mead's work -- and pragmatism more generally -- on the one hand, and postmodernism on the other. As I have argued, pragmatism and postmodernism have a common enemy, viz., the "false psychology of individual consciousness," and the (modern) philosophy of consciousness built upon it. Both pragmatism and postmodernism -- or to be more precise, at least "postmodern" philosophers like Foucault and Derrida -- argue that man is not his own origin. Interestingly enough, there are striking similarities between Mead's position and the way in which ideas of philosophers like Foucault and Derrida have been taken up in current work on human interaction, culture, cultural difference and intercultural communication. What I have in mind, more specifically, is the work of cultural theorist Homi Bhabha. Bhabha introduces notions like the "Third Space" or "*in-between* space" or "realm of intersubjectivity" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37, 38, 184), and argues that "the moment of the subject's individuation emerges as an effect of the intersubjective" (ibid., p. 185). He holds that this point of view makes it possible to speak about a "return of the subject agent" (ibid., p. 184), a return, so he argues, than can now be thought "outside that epistemology that insists on the subject as always prior to the social" (ibid., p. 185). The similarities are striking, not only on a verbal level, to my mind, also with respect to the general tendency to give absolute and radical priority to the intersubjective.

While this suggests that the shift to intersubjectivity is not an idiosyncratic and outdated route of pragmatism, but a road that is currently being explored from a postmodern point of view, there seems to be one crucial difference between the pragmatic and the postmodern conception of intersubjectivity. While pragmatism and postmodernism have a common enemy, I believe that postmodernism has generalized and radicalized the pragmatic critique of this enemy. The critique has been *extended* to include all attempts to define a single, self-present origin. Consciousness is just one of the examples of what Derrida refers to as the "metaphysics of presence."[23] The critique has been *radicalized*, in that it has become clear that theorizing itself can no longer claim to occupy a place outside of the field it is theorizing about. With respect to intersubjectivity, this means, that intersubjectivity can no longer be understood as a new "truth" about man (or men) (see Biesta, in press, a), because "truth" -- and also this

specific "truth" about man -- has, on this account, to be understood as itself emerging out of the intersubjective "realm."

I believe that this line of thought is correct and that a more radical approach to intersubjectivity must be explored. This will, however, raise a crucial question for pragmatism, viz., whether its naturalistic framework (e.g., Mead's phylogenetic account of the development of the act in human evolution) can stand the test of its own implications. I think that this is not the case and that an intersubjective conception of education will eventually have to give up the naturalistic framework of pragmatism. Yet, pragmatism has never claimed to be a foundational and backward-looking philosophy, but a philosophy interested in consequences. It has thereby, in a sense, always already provided the instruments for its own reconstruction. Where this will eventually lead to, I do not yet know. There is, however, every reason to consider Mead's philosophy of education along the way.

Notes

1. The preparation of this paper was supported by a Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Spencer Foundation/National Academy of Education.

2. Jane M. Dewey suggests that Dewey simply took over some of Mead's ideas -- such as Mead's theory on the social origin and nature of selves, and his theory of the psychical "as the state occurring when previously established relations of organism and environment break down and new relations have not yet been built up" -- to the extent that "from the nineties on, the influence of Mead ranked with that of James" (Jane M. Dewey, 1939, p. 26).

3. Mead had actually written a letter of resignation and was considering an offer from Columbia University for the 1931-32 academic year, but his sudden death intervened (see Cook, 1993, pp. 191-193).

4. The "rather meager body of literature dealing specifically with Mead on education" to which Renger referred in 1979 (p. 43) has not substantially increased since. The most important publications on this issue are Renger, 1977, 1979, 1980; Dennis and Stickel, 1981; and Cook, 1993. See also Vaage, 1993; Biesta, 1997.

5. I believe that there is more to say about this issue, than the rather bold claims by Rucker that during the Chicago years Mead was "a full partner with Dewey in the working out of many ideas in education, psychology, and philosophy for which Dewey became justly famous", that they were working "in tandem ... to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish their ideas", and that he and Dewey "were in complete accord on the educational notions they were testing in the laboratory school" (see Rucker, 1968, p. 148).

6. It should be noted that the expression "intersubjectivity" is not Mead's own. It has been suggested by Joas in his authoritative study of Mead's thought (Joas, 1985; see also Joas, 1989).

7. *Philosophy of education. Typescript of student notes by Juliet Hammond, 1910-1911* (196 pp.). George Hebert Mead Papers, Box VIII, Folder 9. The University of Chicago Library.

8. It is not just for reasons of chronology that I base my reconstruction on Mead's early writings. As Joas has argued, the most well-known source of reference for Mead's ideas on social psychology, his *Mind, Self, and Society* is a rather unreliable source, not so much because of the fact that it is based upon student notes, but because the editor of that volume, Charles Morris, has supplemented the original notes to such an extent and with so much liberty that, as Joas argues, apart from Mead's self-characterization as a social behaviorist and some classic quotations, the book expresses the thought of Morris and not that of Mead. Joas has therefore suggested that Mead scholarship should give priority to the texts conceived by Mead himself (see Joas, 1985, p. 8; 1989, p. 92; see also Cook, 1993, p. 65).

9. SW refers to Mead's *Selected Writings* (Reck, 1964). The year is the year of original publication.

10. At least at first sight, this is significant, given the fact that the situation of conflicting tendencies is usually considered to be the starting-point in Dewey's account of reflective inquiry. Mead seems to be aware of this, as he observes, that "the same psychology that states meaning in terms of the attitudes which are the registrations in consciousness of habits of reaction is wont to find in conflicting activities occasion for reflective consciousness" (SW, 1910c, p. 129). A more careful interpretation of Dewey reveals, however, that he does make the distinction that Mead is alluding to (see Biesta, 1992, pp. 61-67; see also Biesta, 1996a).

11. In another article, Mead puts it as follows:

> (E)xperience in its original form became reflective in the recognition of selves, and only gradually was there a differentiated reflective experience of things which were purely physical (SW, 1910a, pp. 112-113).

12. The Wundt-connection is an important dimension in Mead's work that needs further exploration. While in Leipzig, Mead attended Wundt's course on the fundamentals of metaphysics. Whether this course made any impression has to be doubted, given the fact that Mead was still struggling with the German language (see Cook, 1993, p. 20). Mead's publications reveal, however, that Mead had a rather profound knowledge of Wundt's work. See Mead, 1904, 1906c, 1919.

13. The text is taken from the *Annual Register* 1905-1906 (p. 139) where the course was announced for the first time, in the program of the Department of Philosophy and the program of the College of Education. In the *Annual Register* of 1908-1909 the course is only offered in the Department of Education. In the *Annual Register* of 1909-1910 (referring to the year of the typescript) the course is announced as Course 50 in the College of Education. The last announcement of the course is in the *Annual Register* of 1910-1911, with the following description:

> **Philosophy of Education** -- The course deals with the general problem of socialization of the child, and the part which education plays in this process. School practice and theory will be criticized from this point of view. [Not given in 1912.] (*Annual Register* 1910-1911, p. 416)

14. See George Herbert Mead Papers, Box VIII, Folder 8. The University of Chicago Library.
15. For the sake of convenience I will assume that Mead is the author of the text of the typescript.
16. This refers to the three added pages, which are numbered 95, 96 and 97.
17. Mead's account of this development is not always conceptually consistent. What is still "missing" is a clear distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness, between consciousness and reflective consciousness, and between meaning and consciousness of meaning. While he does argue ("correctly") that when there is no conflict "we are not conscious of meaning as meaning," he adds without any reference to a social dimension that "where a problem arises, we do realize definitely that the object means what we need, want, etc..." (VII, p. 40). While he does note that "the constant adjustments to a varying environment must represent a tendency toward a reflective type of consciousness" (VII, p. 46), he does not yet give an indication of such an environment as a social environment.
18. "To be sure you can not separate three stages in our consciousness but by a post mortem examination, i.e. by introspection we can." (XIV, p. 82)
19. Mead explains that we have become attentive to the earlier stages of the act, by referring to "early hostile conditions in the struggle for existence" where it was essential for survival, "that one form be able to interpret the very beginning of the acts of the other form" (III, p. 15).
20. In the social group, Mead explains, "the child's cry and the mother's answer come to have enormous importance," because "the beginnings are not simply beginnings of something inhibited, but they are actual significations of what was to come" (XXXI, p. 168).
21. Mead discusses this in his course referring to Royce's psychology (see XXXVII).
22. It is possible that Mead's account relies upon or is at least inspired by Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*. Wundt conceived of *Völkerpsychologie* as the study of the products of collective life, especially of language, myth, and custom. Apart from the terminological similarities, Mead had discussed Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* in his publications from 1904 and 1906 (see Mead, 1904, 1906c).
23. Intersubjectivity in the phenomenological sense of the word, i.e. as "the intentional phenomenon of the ego" -- quite different from the pragmatic notion -- has also been identified by Derrida as an example of the metaphysics of presence (see Derrida, 1976, p. 12).

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